UCLA Luskin Center for History and Policy

CULTURAL LEGACY

STAGING HERITAGE: POLICY LESSONS FROM GLOBAL CULTURAL EVENTS FOR THE 2028 LA OLYMPICS

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OVERVIEW

This report examines the cultural legacies associated with four major sporting events: the Los Angeles 1984 Olympic Games, the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup, and the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It focuses on lasting changes relevant to museums and cultural institutions, including institutional partnerships, commissioning practices, accessibility, public art and heritage, audience development, cultural infrastructure, and governance. Drawing on official evaluations, institutional documentation, and interviews conducted for the Staging Heritage project, the report compares how cultural investment was planned, delivered, and sustained across the four host contexts.

The case studies suggest that cultural legacy depends on early planning, shared delivery through existing institutions, visible public commissions, audience pathways for non-ticket holders, and programs designed to continue after the event itself. Lasting outcomes were supported by institutional arrangements established before the event, including partnerships, funding structures, commissioning models, accessibility commitments, and plans for continued ownership or delivery. These arrangements helped convert time-limited cultural investment into longer-term institutional and public benefits (Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee, 1985; García, 2013; García, 2024; OECD, 2025).

The cases demonstrate different approaches to cultural legacy. LA84 used existing cultural institutions to deliver a distributed arts program and left institutional, civic, and physical legacies, including new forms of cooperation, public art, and the development of LA Opera. London 2012 produced changes in partnerships, commissioning, youth participation, and disability arts that continued after the Games. Qatar 2022 used the tournament to accelerate museum development, heritage activation, public art, and the integration of cultural institutions into the wider visitor economy. Paris 2024 used funding calls, an official labeling system, accessibility requirements, and partnerships with local authorities to distribute cultural activity across a wide institutional and geographic network.

For museums and cultural institutions in Los Angeles, the report addresses a practical planning question: **How can Games-related cultural investment and activity strengthen institutions, partnerships, accessibility, public assets, and relationships with audiences beyond 2028?** The case studies identify the planning decisions, delivery structures, and institutional commitments that supported lasting outcomes in previous host contexts.

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WORKING DEFINITION: CULTURAL LEGACY

For the purposes of this report, cultural legacy refers to lasting changes produced through Games-related cultural planning and investment. These changes may include institutional partnerships, commissioning practices, accessibility improvements, public art and historical assets, audience relationships, cultural infrastructure, governance arrangements, and programs that continue to create public value after the event.

KEY FINDING:

Cultural legacy depends on decisions made before the Games about institutional ownership, funding, partnerships, maintenance, evaluation, and continuation. The case studies suggest that programs had a stronger basis for continuation when they strengthened existing institutions, established responsibility for what would continue, and included plans for sustaining the work after event-related funding ended.

COMPARATIVE INSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS:

Across the four case studies, this report asks:

- What lasting institutional or public outcomes were created through Games-related cultural investment?
- Which planning, funding, and governance arrangements supported those outcomes?
- Who assumed responsibility for programs, partnerships, or assets after the event?
- How did temporary cultural activity contribute to longer-term changes in institutional practice?
- Which outcomes were documented and evaluated after the event?
- Which approaches could be adapted by museums and cultural institutions preparing for LA28?

LOS ANGELES 1984 OLYMPIC GAMES

The 1984 Olympic Arts Festival was designed as a ten-week program that mostly preceded the sporting competitions, giving cultural activity its own period of public attention and building anticipation for the Games. Festival director Robert Fitzpatrick described this timing as a deliberate effort to prevent the arts program from competing with the sporting schedule (Fitzpatrick, 1984; Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee, 1985).

The festival was delivered through the city's existing cultural infrastructure. Museums, galleries, theaters, performing arts organizations, universities, and community venues participated across the region. The official report identifies 48 venues, and approximately 1,500 artists, 400 events, and participation from 18 countries. This distributed structure allowed the festival to present an international program across a geographically dispersed city without constructing a separate cultural campus (Fitzpatrick, 1984; Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee, 1985).

The organizing committee reported approximately $11.5 million in direct festival expenditure and nearly $5 million in performing arts ticket revenue. Participating institutions provided venues, staff, production capacity, curatorial knowledge, and relationships with local audiences. They served as producers and delivery partners within the wider festival program. The official report later identified a new spirit of cooperation among leading Los Angeles arts organizations as one of the festival's principal legacies (Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee, 1985; Fitzpatrick, 1984).

The festival notably produced permanent public art. Robert Graham's Olympic Gateway, installed at the entrance to the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, became a lasting physical marker of the Games. The Olympic Mural Project commissioned ten artists to create murals along freeways connecting Olympic venues. Several of these works later required restoration following weathering, vandalism, and damage (Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee, 1985). The continued presence and restoration of surviving works illustrate both the potential longevity of Games-related public art and the need to establish responsibility for its maintenance.

LA84 also contributed to longer-term institutional development. LA Opera traces its establishment to the success of the Royal Opera's appearances during the Olympic Arts Festival and the subsequent effort to create a permanent resident opera company in Los Angeles. The company was established following the festival and presented its inaugural production in 1986. This provides a significant example of a temporary cultural program contributing to the creation of permanent institutional capacity (LA Opera, 2024).

Together, these outcomes show that LA84's cultural legacy extended across institutional cooperation, permanent organizations, and public art. The festival used the city's existing cultural sector as its principal delivery infrastructure, while also contributing to permanent assets and identifiable institutional outcomes.

The LA84 case study also highlights the challenges of evaluating cultural legacy over time. Permanent artworks and the establishment of LA Opera provide documented examples of continuity, while the longer-term effects on institutional partnerships and practices are less well documented. Evaluating these less visible forms of legacy requires clear objectives and sustained assessment beyond the immediate post-Games period.

LA84 TAKEAWAYS FOR LA28

Unknown, U.S. Air Force, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

The timing of the 1984 Olympic Arts Festival suggests that planning for the LA28 Cultural Olympiad may benefit from beginning well before the Games: extending activity across the pre-Games, Games-time, and post-Games periods may give participating institutions greater visibility and help manage competing demands on public attention.

LA84 also provides an example of a **cultural program delivered through existing institutions**. Museums and cultural organizations contributed venues, expertise, production capacity, and audience relationships. A similar approach to the LA28 Cultural Olympiad could involve early coordination around institutional roles, communications, joint programming, collection loans, and geographic distribution.

The public art commissions and subsequent establishment of LA Opera indicate different ways in which Games-related cultural activity may contribute to longer-term public and institutional value. These examples suggest that intended legacy outcomes, responsibility for continuation, and future resource requirements could be usefully considered during the planning process.

The LA84 case study also raises questions about how cultural legacy is documented. Permanent artworks and new organizations are comparatively visible, while changes in partnerships, institutional practice, and sector capacity are harder to trace. Establishing objectives and baseline information before 2028 may make these less tangible outcomes easier to assess after the Games.

LONDON 2012 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES

The London 2012 Cultural Olympiad was a four-year program that culminated in the twelve-week London 2012 Festival. Its duration allowed cultural organizations to develop projects, partnerships, and commissioning arrangements over several years. The official evaluation recorded 117,717 activities across the Cultural Olympiad, including 33,631 during the London 2012 Festival. The program involved 40,464 artists, produced 5,370 new works or commissions, and generated an estimated 43.4 million public engagement experiences (García, 2013; Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2013).

The official evaluation identified institutional partnerships as a significant outcome. Fifty-four percent of surveyed projects reported that their activity would probably or definitely not have taken place without the Cultural Olympiad, while 56 percent identified the development of new partnerships as the most significant new dimension of their work. García also found evidence that partnerships, festivals, and commissions established through the program continued after 2012. These findings indicate that the Cultural Olympiad affected the relationships and working practices through which cultural activity was produced, alongside the scale of activity delivered during the Games (García, 2013).

Museums participated through *Stories of the World*, described in the official evaluation as the largest youth participation program undertaken by museums in the United Kingdom at that time. Thousands of young people worked with museum collections, contributed to interpretation, and co-curated exhibitions across participating institutions. The program expanded the role of young participants within curatorial work and provided a shared framework through which museums could collaborate while developing locally specific projects (García, 2013).

Disability arts provide another significant example of institutional change. The official post-Games evaluation described the involvement of disabled artists in the Cultural Olympiad as unprecedented and identified *Unlimited* as the largest program of commissions for Deaf and disabled artists undertaken in the United Kingdom. *Unlimited* continued after 2012 through additional commissioning rounds, festivals, international partnerships, and Arts Council funding. Its continuation illustrates how a Games-related initiative can contribute to longer-term changes in cultural production when commissioning structures, funding, and organizational partnerships remain in place after the event (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2013; Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2016).

The London 2012 case study therefore provides evidence of legacy through changes in institutional relationships and cultural production. New partnerships, youth participation, collection-based collaboration, and disability-led commissioning extended beyond individual Games-time events. Their continuation depended on organizations retaining the partnerships, funding structures, and professional practices developed through the Cultural Olympiad.

London's Live Sites also raise the possibility that temporary public spaces can support longer-term cultural participation. Their legacy would depend on whether the infrastructure, partnerships, programming models, and audience relationships developed for the Games were retained or adapted afterwards. For LA28, planning for public cultural sites could therefore include consideration of their future ownership, reuse, and connection to the city's cultural institutions.

LONDON 2012 TAKEAWAYS FOR LA28

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The London 2012 case study suggests that **a multi-year Cultural Olympiad can give institutions time to develop partnerships, commission work, and build relationships with participants.** Early involvement in the LA28 Cultural Olympiad may similarly support collaborative programs that can continue after the Games.

Stories of the World provides a model for collaboration around museum collections. Participating museums **involved young people in interpretation and co-curation while adapting projects to their own collections and communities.** A comparable initiative could connect museums, archives, young people, and community partners across Los Angeles.

The continuation of Unlimited highlights the importance of **sustained commissioning, partnerships, and funding.** Initiatives intended to continue beyond LA28 may require future ownership and resources to be identified during planning.

The London 2012 case study also suggests that institutional change can provide an important measure of cultural legacy. **Partnerships, participatory curatorial practices, commissioning models, and professional capacity** may continue after Games-time programming ends and could be included in post-Games evaluation.

QATAR FIFA WORLD CUP 2022

The Qatar 2022 case study illustrates how a mega-event can accelerate a cultural development strategy established years before the event itself. Interviews conducted with Qatar Museums and Supreme Committee staff indicated that preparations for the tournament were incorporated into a longer period of investment in museums, collections, public art, heritage sites, and cultural infrastructure. The World Cup provided a fixed deadline and an international platform for presenting this work, while many of the projects formed part of institutional plans intended to continue beyond 2022.

Public art was a central component of this strategy: Qatar Museums expanded its acquisition and commissioning program over several years, placing works by Qatari, regional, and international artists throughout Doha and in public locations used by residents and tournament visitors. Interview participants at Qatar Museums described an intention to present the city as an open-air museum during the World Cup. The location of artworks across the urban environment allowed cultural activity to remain visible outside formal institutions and incorporated art into the wider experience of moving through the host city.

The continued presence of these works after the tournament represents one of the clearest cultural legacies associated with Qatar 2022. The works continued to form part of the city's public realm after the tournament and remained accessible to residents and future audiences. This approach also required long-term institutional responsibility for acquisition, conservation, interpretation, and maintenance, embedding Games-related cultural investment within the continuing work of Qatar Museums.

Qatar Museums presented its largest exhibition program to date across eight museums and galleries and offered previews of institutions in development. Exhibitions at the 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum and Doha Stadium connected the country's football history with the tournament, while temporary and off-site formats extended museum content into spaces used by football audiences (Qatar Museums, 2022a; Qatar Museums, 2022d; Qatar Museums, 2022e). These initiatives connected tournament-related programming to Qatar Museums' broader institutional program.

Heritage activation formed another part of this investment. Six archaeological and heritage sites opened in time for the World Cup, supported by self-guided interpretation. At the Al Zubarah Archaeological Site, Qatar Museums constructed a three-kilometre sustainable boardwalk through the historic town. These improvements expanded access to sites outside Doha and remained in use after the tournament (Qatar Museums, 2022f).

The Qatar 2022 case study therefore locates cultural legacy in the relationship between long-term institutional planning and the delivery timetable of a mega-event. The tournament accelerated investment, expanded the public visibility of cultural assets, and connected museums, public art, heritage, tourism, and urban space. The continued presence of commissioned artworks and heritage infrastructure provides tangible evidence of legacy, while the longer-term effects on audiences and institutional collaboration require further assessment.

QATAR 2022 TAKEAWAYS FOR LA28

The Qatar 2022 case study suggests that **a mega-event can accelerate cultural priorities already embedded in long-term institutional plans**. Los Angeles museums could identify existing projects—such as collection access, public-art conservation, historical interpretation, or visitor infrastructure—that may benefit from the timetable and visibility associated with LA28.

Qatar's open-air museum approach is particularly relevant to Los Angeles's distributed geography and established public-art and mural traditions. LA28 could support new commissions alongside the conservation, interpretation, and renewed visibility of existing works. Early planning would need to address location, community relevance, ownership, maintenance, and responsibility after 2028.

The Qatar 2022 case study also indicates how **cultural content can be incorporated into routes already used by event audiences**. In Los Angeles, public art, collection displays, and heritage interpretation could be connected to transit corridors, neighborhood cultural hubs, competition areas, and other points within the Games-time visitor journey.

This approach would require coordination among museums, artists, community organizations, public agencies, transit authorities, and Games organizers. Establishing these relationships early may help direct LA28-related investment toward cultural assets and institutional priorities that remain useful to Los Angeles communities after the Games.

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PARIS 2024 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES

The Paris 2024 case study provides a recent example of cultural legacy being incorporated into the governance of a Cultural Olympiad. The official evaluation recorded 2,596 labelled projects and 111,066 activities delivered between 2021 and 2024, with a direct budget of approximately EUR 41 million. Projects involved 5,048 host cities across metropolitan and overseas France and received support from seven major funding stakeholders (García, 2024; OECD, 2025).

The Cultural Olympiad combined direct funding with an official labeling system. Thirty calls for projects supported 950 funded initiatives, while the Cultural Olympiad label allowed additional organizations to participate without requiring the Paris 2024 Organizing Committee to serve as their principal funder. This structure distributed cultural delivery among national and local government, cultural institutions, funders, community organizations, and host cities while maintaining a recognizable connection to the Games (García, 2024).

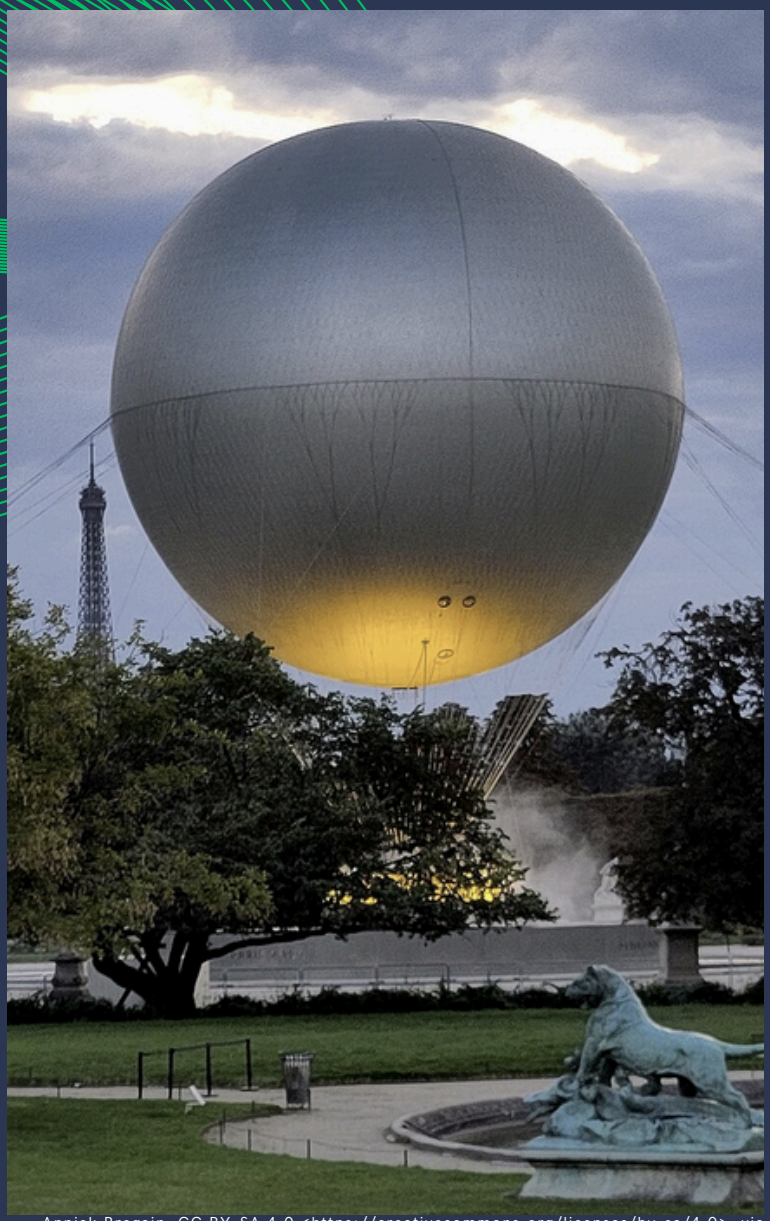
The geographic distribution of activity was a significant feature of the program. Sixty-nine percent of activities took place in areas that did not host Olympic or Paralympic competitions, while 51.5 percent were presented in spaces not ordinarily used for culture. Only 12.5 percent of projects were directly connected to major Games moments, such as competition venues or the torch relay. These figures indicate that the program's reach depended on local cultural networks and public spaces across France as well as activity in central Paris (García, 2024).

Accessibility was also incorporated into funding, commissioning, and evaluation. The evaluation found that 34 percent of projects involved disabled artists or producers and 51 percent included provisions intended to improve accessibility. Dedicated funding supported disability-led work, and evaluation categories recorded both the involvement of disabled cultural practitioners and the accessibility measures adopted by projects (García, 2024).

Some projects also contributed to changes within participating institutions. The Panthéon's *Histoire du Paralympisme* exhibition led the institution to review its accessibility policies and develop additional staff training and interpretive approaches. *Five Museums for the Games* connected the Centre Pompidou, Louvre, Musée d'Orsay, Musée de l'Orangerie, and Musée du Quai Branly through a shared family trail, providing an example of institutions coordinating interpretation across separate collections and sites (García, 2024; Le Monde, 2024).

The evaluation reported that 54 percent of projects intended to continue after the Games. Given the proximity of the evaluation to the event, this figure records planned continuation rather than confirmed long-term survival. The Paris 2024 case study therefore documents governance arrangements designed to support legacy, while the durability of individual projects, partnerships, and institutional changes will require assessment over a longer period.

PARIS 2024 TAKEAWAYS FOR LA28



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The Paris 2024 case study suggests that a Cultural Olympiad can involve a wide institutional network through **a combination of direct funding and official affiliation**. A comparable LA28 framework could enable museums and cultural organizations to participate at different levels, including institutions able to deliver relevant programming without receiving direct Games funding. Clear eligibility, branding, reporting, and coordination requirements would be needed to maintain coherence across the program.

The geographic reach of the Paris Cultural Olympiad is relevant to the scale and diversity of Los Angeles County. **Cultural activity could be organized through neighborhoods, transit corridors, local authorities, and existing cultural networks**, including areas without competition venues. This approach may broaden participation while allowing individual projects to respond to local communities and institutional priorities.

The Paris 2024 case study also indicates how **accessibility can be incorporated into funding, commissioning, and evaluation**. LA28 cultural frameworks could ask participating institutions to address accessibility during project development and document the involvement of disabled artists, producers, and audiences. This may support institutional improvements that remain useful after the Games.

Finally, **planned continuation should be distinguished from demonstrated legacy**. Requiring projects to identify future ownership, resources, partnerships, and intended outcomes would provide a stronger basis for assessing what continues after 2028. A shared evaluation framework across LA28, the City, the County, and participating cultural institutions may also make it easier to assess collective outcomes across a decentralized program.

CROSS-CASE FINDINGS FOR LA28

Across the four case studies, cultural legacy took different forms. The LA84 case study highlights the use of existing institutions, public art, and institutional development. The London 2012 case study emphasizes partnerships, participatory curatorial practice, disability-led commissioning, and changes in cultural production. The Qatar 2022 case study illustrates how a mega-event can accelerate long-term investment in museums, heritage, and public art. The Paris 2024 case study provides a model of distributed delivery through funding, affiliation, accessibility, and local governance.

These cases suggest that legacy is shaped by decisions made during the planning period. The timing of cultural activity, selection of delivery partners, design of funding and commissioning structures, and identification of intended outcomes all influence what may continue after the event. For LA28, cultural legacy planning could therefore begin with a clear account of what participating institutions and communities expect to retain beyond 2028.

Existing institutions are likely to provide much of the capacity required to deliver and sustain this work. Museums, cultural organizations, public agencies, artists, universities, and community partners already hold collections, expertise, facilities, and relationships with local audiences. A shared framework could help these institutions coordinate while allowing individual programs to reflect the priorities of different neighborhoods and communities.

Continuation also depends on ownership and resources. Programs, partnerships, public artworks, accessibility improvements, and visitor infrastructure may require funding, staff capacity, maintenance, or formal institutional responsibility after the Games. Identifying these requirements during project development may help distinguish initiatives designed for a limited event period from those intended to produce longer-term value.

The case studies also indicate that cultural legacy include both visible assets and changes in institutional practice. Public artworks, exhibitions, and physical improvements can be documented directly. Changes in partnerships, commissioning, accessibility, audience relationships, and professional capacity require baseline information and longer-term evaluation. Los Angeles institutions may therefore need different measures for physical, institutional, and social outcomes.

The decentralized character of Los Angeles creates both opportunities and coordination challenges. Cultural activity will involve institutions of different sizes across the City, County, and wider region, including areas without competition venues. A coordinated approach among LA28, public agencies, and cultural partners could support shared standards for affiliation, accessibility, communications, documentation, and evaluation while preserving local and institutional autonomy.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS FOR MUSEUMS AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

The following discussion prompts are derived from the four case studies and interviews conducted with museum professionals, cultural institutions, organizing committee representatives, and public officials. They are intended to support institutional planning for cultural activity associated with LA28 and its longer-term legacy.

LEGACY AND INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES

- What lasting outcomes should the institution seek to achieve through its participation in LA28?
- Which existing priorities could LA28-related investment or partnerships advance?
- Which communities should benefit during and after the Games?
- Which programs, institutional practices, or public assets should be sustained beyond 2028?

OWNERSHIP AND CONTINUATION

- Which institutional, public, and community partners are needed?
- What responsibilities will each partner hold before, during, and after the Games?
- Who will own and maintain programs, commissions, or public assets after 2028?
- What funding, staffing, conservation, or operational resources will continuation require?

EVALUATION AND INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING

- What baseline information should be collected before LA28?
- How will changes in audiences, accessibility, partnerships, and institutional practice be assessed?
- How will tangible assets and less visible institutional changes be documented?
- When and by whom will legacy outcomes be reviewed after the Games?

Methodological Considerations

This report draws on official post-event evaluations, government and organizing committee reports, institutional documentation, and interviews conducted for the Staging Heritage project with museum professionals, cultural institutions, organizing committee representatives, and public officials. The case studies were selected to examine different approaches to cultural legacy across museums, public art, heritage, commissioning, accessibility, institutional partnerships, and governance.

The available evidence varies across the four cases. London 2012 has an extensive post-event evaluation record, while official documentation of LA84's longer-term institutional effects is more limited. The Qatar 2022 case study draws partly on institutional reporting and interviews, and Paris 2024 remains too recent for planned continuation to be assessed as established legacy.

Differences in event type, geography, governance, funding, and the time elapsed since each event also limit direct comparison. In some cases, Games-related activity accelerated cultural strategies and institutional investment already underway, making causal attribution difficult. The findings should therefore be read as comparative planning references requiring adaptation to the institutional and community contexts of Los Angeles.

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